

Technology

New technology designed to enhance security and facilitate the flow of commerce is being deployed in one of the most novel aspects of the FAST program—the ability to provide Customs with the information it needs, electronically, before a shipment arrives at the border. By the time a carrier arrives at the border, Customs can simply read an encoded number from a bar-coded window sticker and instantly transfer information identifying the carrier and its shipment to a customs inspector's computer. One of the more avant-garde ways to bolster security and efficiency in the Smart Border is the use of peoples' unique physiological characteristics to confirm their identity (biometrics). Already, a pilot project at Pearson International Airport and at Vancouver International Airport (CANPASS-Air), which began in January 2003, is set to speed up customs and immigration clearance for travellers to make air travel and processing time faster through the use of the latest iris recognition technology.²⁴ In addition, technologically upgraded passport readers, x-ray machines and other tracking equipment are to be deployed to help identify terrorists and uncovering dangerous materials in containers and vehicles.

Infrastructure

New commitments involving improved border infrastructure—bridges, tunnels, connecting highways, customs facilities—have been made to help relieve congestion in the medium to long term and to increase security by enhancing service at facilities. A Border Infrastructure Fund of \$600 million has been set up the Government of Canada support this aspect of the Smart Border Action Plan.

²⁴ "New Customs program using Iris Recognition Technology Makes Clearing Customs Simpler and Quicker," Internet; Press Release; Canada Customs and Revenue Agency; Available at: <http://www.ccradrc.gc.ca/newsroom/releases/2002/sep/iris-e.html>; Accessed November 27, 2002.